

## Water and Sanitation in the News

### **Infrastructure maintenance essential to tackle water crisis – DA**

The maintenance of water infrastructure was again in the spotlight on Tuesday when the Democratic Alliance presented the outcome of their oversight visits to various municipalities. The party visited 50 municipalities in the North West, Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape.

Members of Parliament Phumzile Van Damme, Leon Basson and Tarnia Baker stressed the importance of properly managing scarce water resources. "This is vital not only for human consumption, but for food security," Van Damme said. The party slammed the African National Congress for what they termed "mismanagement of the infrastructure", while lauding the Western Cape for being "great examples" of how water treatment should be managed.

One of the solutions, the DA said, would be to maintain a pool of engineers that could be deployed to municipalities where needed to maintain the water infrastructure. The party said the Department of Water and Sanitation should prioritise legislation to amend the National Water Act to allow the Minister to withdraw a water use license from a municipality if certain minimum standards and requirements were not met. During their oversight visits, they found untreated sewage flowing into rivers and dams and dysfunctional water treatment plants, they claimed.

Source: [News24, 08 December 2015](#)

### **Context**

The report presented by the DA details visits to several provinces in which, the party says, raw sewage was found to be flowing into dams and rivers, and there was a lack of equipment with which to treat water. The report notes severe infrastructure maintenance and operational deficiencies at numerous areas across the country: pollution in the St Lucia estuary in KwaZulu-Natal, and in Kraaipan, in North West, 10000 residents are served by one tap. The Lichtenburg Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) is non-functioning and sewage is pumped into the veld next to the Boikhutso Township where children play and people walk every day.

In Cradock in the Eastern Cape, untreated sewage was found to be flowing directly into the Great Fish River. In Humansdorp in the Eastern Cape, the WWTW is non-functional with raw sewage - still containing solids - running through an informal settlement into a neighbouring farmer's dam. In Jeffreys's Bay,

untreated sewage is being pumped out of a sewer line into a dam in a residential area, opposite the Jeffreys Bay High School.

In Limpopo, the Bela-Bela WWTW is dysfunctional. Untreated sewage runs through the plant at 92 litres per second. Solids are taken out by a manual grid and then the untreated water flows straight into the river. At Rooiwal in Pretoria 104.8 million litres of untreated sewage spilling into the Apies River each day. Due to the non-functioning of the sludge plant, sewage sludge is pumped straight onto an adjacent farmland that drains into a large wetland. The DA said: "Water loss due to leaks, commercial losses and unbilled consumption" was exceptionally high. In the biggest metros, losses averaged 40%." DA MP Tarnia Baker said the biggest losses were not from leaking taps but from burst and leaking pipes, which accounted for millions of litres of water lost. She said that in Tshwane the problem was not that there was no water but that the storage capacity of the city's reservoir was inadequate.

Two government reports, the 2014 Blue and Green Drop on the quality of South Africa's water, completed earlier this year, were to have been released in September but Minister Nomvula Mokonyane has delayed their publication. Copies of the reports have, however, been given to municipalities. The DA has since filed an application in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) for the reports and accordingly the Minister has until next week Wednesday to release the report. Department of Water Affairs spokesman Sputnik Ratau said he had not seen the DA report and would need time to read it before commenting. But he said the current water crisis was attributable to "hydrological" issues, such as drought, the El Niño periodic weather phenomenon and climate change. "Each municipality must put together a recovery plan to indicate how they will improve the quality of drinking water and the quality of water flowing from waste water treatment plants," Ratau said...

Sources: [TimesLive, 09 Dec 2015](#); [AllAfrica, 08 Dec 2015](#)

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